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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, CHRISTIAN
SATELLITE TELEVISION FLOURISH DESPITE CHALLENGING
ENVIRONMENT

REF: A. A) 07 ASTANA 654

[1](#)B. B) 07 ASTANA 741

[1](#)C. C) 07 ASTANA 1371

[1](#)D. D) 07 ASTANA 2718

Classified By: Ambassador John Ordway; reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Kazakhstan is home to the world's largest Russian language Christian satellite television network and a steadily growing, openly evangelical Pentecostal church, surprising facts considering the negative attention the country sometimes receives for its treatment of groups that are not part of the Muslim, Russian Orthodox, Catholic, or Jewish mainstream. Though the religious freedom landscape is far from perfect, some minority religious groups are able to operate very effectively. End summary.

A MEGA-CHURCH IN ALMATY

[1](#)2. (C) Poloff met on December 14, 2007 with Maksim Maksimov, founding pastor of the New Life (Pentecostal) Church in Almaty and head of a worldwide satellite television ministry called New Life Channel ("CNL"). The meeting took place in Maksimov's office in the main New Life ministry center in Almaty, a multi-building complex including a church, offices, classrooms, broadcast production facilities, cafeteria, and prayer center. The complex was swarming with dozens of staffers and volunteers, and in many respects had the look and feel of an American mega-church.

[1](#)3. (C) Maksimov, who is as much an entrepreneur as he is a pastor, founded the first New Life Church in Kazakhstan in September 1990. He reports that the denomination is registered nationally, and there are approximately 100 New Life churches throughout Kazakhstan, with a total of 8,000-10,000 regular attendees. In Almaty alone, there are seven New Life churches, including a Kazakh-language and a Uighur-language church. In addition to traditional church activities, the ministry center in Almaty runs a soup kitchen for homeless and poor people, provides health care to the indigent, trains pastors and missionaries, and organizes ministries for deaf people and prisoners. Maksimov said that pastors and missionaries trained in Almaty have helped establish churches throughout Kazakhstan and other countries in the region, and that the church regularly sends missionaries abroad, including to China. Maksimov also runs a website popular with church members in Kazakhstan; among other things, he writes a question and answer column addressing spiritual questions from church members (www.maximmaximov.org).

BROADCASTING TO A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE

¶4. (C) Maksimov was most energized when discussing CNL (www.CNL.org), which began broadcasting for a few hours a day on the local Almaty cable network in December 2000. In July 2002, he secured the first satellite contract for the network, and has steadily expanded its reach since then. Today, CNL is broadcast through three satellites which together reach virtually the entire world, with the exception of South America. CNL is also shown on over 400 cable networks worldwide, including several in Kazakhstan. According to Maksimov, it is the largest Russian-language Christian television network in the world. The network features some original programming, including broadcasts of Maksimov's Sunday morning services, as well as other evangelical programming from throughout the world, all translated into Russian by the network's in-house translation staff. The ministry center features a separate production facility for the network, and is crammed full of young, savvy workers pouring over broadcast schedules, designing graphics, and recording Russian-language translations of the programming they have acquired from abroad. Maksimov reports that most of their workers are trained in-house, and that they are a largely self-sufficient operation. The ministry center also offers television broadcasting training to interested students from throughout Kazakhstan, and actively encourages local churches to use television as part of their ministry.

¶5. (C) CNL does not aQ&N,588